



News Release

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Media Contact:

Whitney Johnson

Health Education Specialist

801-538-6829

New Colon Cancer Ads Feature Real Utah Stories *Campaign urges prevention to save lives*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Each year, colon cancer kills an estimated 230 Utahns. For the majority of victims and their families, a simple colonoscopy could have changed everything.

“We didn’t even know it was colon cancer at first,” says Karen Coleman, whose father, sports enthusiast Doug Miller, died of colon cancer in 2006. “It started with just a minor stomachache that everybody has had,” Coleman adds. “My dad was only 58 years old. He had not had a colonoscopy. Had he gotten one at age 50, he’d still be here today.”

In recognition of March as Colon Cancer Awareness Month, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and Utah Cancer Action Network (UCAN) have launched a series of TV and print ads featuring real stories from Utahns like Coleman and Reggie Price. Price was fortunate to survive colon cancer, but his is a cautionary tale.

“It’s avoidable,” says Price. “But I was ignorant. I put off getting tested and still have a lot of problems after multiple surgeries and treatment,” he adds. “My life now is very different, but it’s still worth living.”

Colon cancer is the second-leading cancer killer of men and women, claiming the lives of more than 1,000 Utahns in the last five years. The new ads will raise awareness and encourage people 50 and older to get a colonoscopy. Colon cancer remains one of the most detectable cancers, and because there are no symptoms in the early stages, it is even more important to get screened.

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Due in part to UDOH and UCAN efforts, there has been a 27% increase in colon cancer screenings in the last five years. With the new ad campaign, UDOH hopes to motivate the thousands of Utahns over 50 who still have not been screened to go in for a colonoscopy.

“We’re thrilled that more Utahns are getting colonoscopies and hopeful the ads will send even more people rushing to their doctors to get screened,” said UDOH Executive Director Dr. David Sundwall. “My own grandfather died from the disease,” he added. “My father had it, too, but was diagnosed and treated early enough to prevent it from spreading. So you can be sure I get my screening colonoscopies as recommended.”

The new ads will run in newspapers and on television through June. They feature four Utahns who have dealt with colon cancer themselves or had someone close to them affected by the disease. Pat Dalpiaz is one of them and is a success story. She was prodded by a friend to get screened at age 56, only to find two stage-I tumors growing in her colon. After surgery she is healthy and in remission.

Although colonoscopies can prevent cancer from happening or catch it early when it’s still curable, only 60 percent of Utah men and women over 50 have had a colonoscopy in the last 10 years. The bottom line is simple: The earlier it’s diagnosed, the greater the survival rate.

Many Utahns say they haven’t been screened because their insurance doesn’t cover it, they can’t afford the co-pay, or don’t have insurance. To help those who can’t afford a colonoscopy, the UCCP is offering a limited number of free screenings to eligible residents over age 50. Call 1-800-717-1811 to see if you qualify.

NOTE: For interviews with Karen Coleman or Reggie Price, contact Whitney Johnson at 801-538-6829.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care and promoting healthy lifestyles.